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December 4, 2020

Thank you for subscribing to my weekly newsletter. Below you will find important federal, state and local updates from the last week curated for you in one place.

This week, at the Capitol in Austin, newly elected members have begun orientation to familiarize themselves with the processes and procedures of the Texas House. I would like to welcome all new members, and look forward to working with each of them. Tomorrow, the House Republican Caucus is meeting to begin strategizing for the upcoming 87th Legislative Session.

Should you have any questions about the information below, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please utilize email communication with our office during this time, via the email contact information at the bottom of this newsletter.

Sincerely,

*Dan*



State Updates

DSHS: COVID-19 Case Dashboard

## Texas Case Counts

# COVID-19

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

## Governor Abbott Announces Initial COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution For Month Of December



Office of the Texas Governor | Greg Abbott

### **Governor Abbott Announces Initial COVID-19 Vaccine...**

Governor Greg Abbott today announced that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made an initial allotment of over 1.4 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines to the State of Texas for the month of December.

[Read more](https://gov.texas.gov)  
gov.texas.gov

## Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Extension Of Emergency SNAP Benefits For December 2020



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human Services

### **Gov. Abbott, HHSC Announce Extension of Emergency SNAP...**

Gov. Greg Abbott announced that Texas HHSC will provide approximately \$204 million in emergency Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits for the month of December as the state continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic....

[Read more](#)  
[hhs.texas.gov](https://hhs.texas.gov)

## Secretary Hughs Commends Texas Voters Following November 3rd General Election



## TxDOT Launches Digital Highway Sign Contest

### **TxDOT Launches Digital Highway Sign Contest**

AUSTIN - By now most Texans have seen the informative - and often clever - messages above Texas highways on digital message boards that encourage safer driving. Well now it's your time to shine.

[Read more](#)  
[www.txdot.gov](https://www.txdot.gov)

## Commissioner Keller: Higher Education is Key to Texas' Economic Recovery



In his second annual State of Texas Higher Education address, Commissioner Harrison Keller today stated the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most significant disruption to higher education institutions since the end of the Second World War. Despite the challenges, he emphasized higher education as an essential part of the solution for how Texas will overcome and emerge even stronger from the pandemic.

“Texans have a long track record of innovating through adversity, and this year has been no exception. So, while 2020 has brought unprecedented challenges, it has also presented extraordinary opportunities to accelerate the pace of innovation in teaching and learning and exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit of Texas colleges and universities,” Dr. Keller said. “Work is already underway, though it will have to accelerate over the next several months and into the coming years. Our priority needs to be laying foundations for economic recovery and a better, more just future.”

In response to the impacts of COVID-19, Gov. Greg Abbott and legislative leadership committed \$175 million for higher education from the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER). Distributed earlier this year, the funds have helped institutions adapt to COVID-19 and continue to serve their students. Most of the GEER funds were dedicated to student financial aid, including \$57 million to protect need-based financial aid programs from coronavirus-related budget cuts, and another \$46.5 million for emergency financial aid for students who were adversely impacted by the pandemic. An additional \$46.5 million was allocated to help Texans who have some college credit but no credential and to help displaced Texas workers who need to reskill and upskill with short-term credentials so they can rejoin the workforce, get back on their feet, and help drive the recovery of the state economy. The remaining funds support high-quality digital learning and the modernization of state educational and workforce data infrastructure, enabling the agency to focus resources effectively and efficiently and support continuous improvement.

“This financial support represents a powerful statement from our Texas state leadership — leadership you’re not seeing in every other state. They recognize the critical role higher education needs to play in driving the state’s recovery and are investing in the future of Texas,” Dr. Keller said in his address. “As we look forward to 2021 and the 87th Legislative Session, we must come together for the advancement of higher education in Texas. Together, I believe we can overcome any additional challenges that come our way, especially by expanding opportunities for Texans to achieve new credentials and skills, accelerating educational innovation by leveraging the potential of technology, and working at the frontiers of knowledge to develop the insights and discoveries that will enable a better Texas future.”

A [video](#) and [transcript](#) of Commissioner Keller’s address are available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [website](#)

## Safely Make Your Holidays Merry and Bright at a Texas State Park, THC Historic Site



### Safely Make Your Holidays Merry and Bright at a Texas...

Texas State Parks and the Texas Historical Commission host self-guided and social distanced events celebrating Christmas AUSTIN- Although holiday celebrations look a little different this year, Texas State Parks and the Texas Historical...

[Read more](#)  
tpwd.texas.gov

## City of Houston & Harris County Updates

### Harris County Public Health Dashboard



Harris County  
**Public Health**  
Building a Healthy Community



# City of Houston Launches Internet Voucher Program with CARES Act Funding



City Council recently approved a \$624,960 program to provide internet vouchers to low-income Houstonians. Mayor Sylvester Turner's Health Equity Response (H.E.R.) Task Force has partnered with Comcast to provide approximately 5,000 vouchers to qualifying applicants from now until December 20, 2020. This agreement will ensure qualifying applicants can continue to stay connected to the internet for education, work, and personal health reasons for one calendar year.

"This pandemic has highlighted the importance of quality internet service particularly for those vulnerable populations who must stay at home to stay safe," said Mayor Sylvester Turner. "This program will provide a lifeline for citizens that have struggled through the pandemic without internet access and a way to stay informed, connected and safe during these challenging times."

To qualify for the Internet Voucher Program, applicants must reside in the City of Houston and have a Comcast serviceable address. Applicants must also meet two additional sets of criteria. First, they must demonstrate that their total household income prior to February 2020 was lower than 80 percent of the Area Median Income. Second, they must be a member of one of the following groups: persons over age 65, persons with disabilities, households with children less than five years of age, or opportunity youth, defined as persons ages 16-24 who are not currently enrolled in school or participating in the workforce.

"During this unprecedented time, it is vital for Houstonians to stay connected to the Internet – for education, work, and personal health reasons," said Comcast's Melinda Little, Director of Government Affairs, Houston Region. "We're proud to partner with the City of Houston and Mayor Sylvester Turner's Health Equity Response Task Force to help keep Houstonians connected through our Internet Essentials Program."

This program is a complement to the City's Computer Access Program. Digital connectivity has become critical during the pandemic, but devices alone are less effective if people cannot use them to access the internet. While there are similar internet access programs for families with school-age children, the H.E.R. Task Force realized there were critical groups that were being overlooked.

"The shift online in everything from grocery shopping to accessing healthcare has been an additional barrier that Houstonians with disabilities have been forced to confront as a result of COVID-19," said Gabe Cazares, Director of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. "Thanks to Mayor Turner's commitment to equity and accessibility and the City Council's support, this program will breakdown that barrier by providing in-home internet access for qualifying Houstonians with disabilities, enhancing their independence and self-determination."

The vouchers will be distributed on a first come, first serve basis. Vouchers must be redeemed by December 20, 2020. Because these groups may not have access to digital ads or articles, the H.E.R. Task Force is encouraging Houstonians to refer the program to loved ones or friends who might need assistance.

For more information or to apply, visit <https://houston.comcast.com/2020/11/30/cohiepp/> or call one of the following contacts:

For persons over age 65, call the Harris County Area Agency on Aging at **832-393-4301**.

For persons with disabilities, call the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities at **832-394-0814**.

For households with children under 5 years old, call the Collaborative for Children at **713-600-1100**.

For opportunity youth (ages 16-24), call Project Grad at **888-713-GRAD (4723)**.

The relief fund is part of the \$400 million in CARES Act funding provided to the City of Houston.

## Capitol Office Closure

The Capitol office will remain closed in line with suggested Stay Home, Work Safe guidelines. Please utilize email communication with our office during this time, via the email contact information at the bottom of this newsletter or [district127.huberty@house.texas.gov](mailto:district127.huberty@house.texas.gov).

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